

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 17855

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR FR UR

SUCJ: FRENCH-SOVIET RELATIONS-- FOREIGN MINISTRY

EXPERTS ARE NOT WORRIED

REF: PARIS 16794

SUMMARY: RECENT ATTACKS BY SOVIET MEDIA ON FRENCH INTER-
IOR MINISTER PONIATOWSKI HAVE GENERATED SPECULATION ABOUT
SOVIET MOTIVATION. IN THE FOREIGN POLICY CONTEXT, IT IS
FELT THAT THE SOVIETS ARE EXPRESSING DISAPPOINTMENT AT
PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING'S COMMITMENT TO A MORE UNI-
FIED AND STRONGER EUROPE, WITH ALL THAT THIS IMPLIES FOR
A MORE POWERFUL GERMANY. IN THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNIST
PARTY RELATIONS, THE SOVIETS MAY BE SHORING UP FRENCH
COMMUNIST PARTY LOYALTY AFTER HAVING SACRIFICED THE
PARTY'S INTERESTS IN THE 1974 ELECTIONS. WHATEVER THE
TRUE STORY, THE FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTRY IS PLAYING IT
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COOL IN ANTICIPATION OF GISCARD'S VISIT TO THE USSR NEXT

OCTOBER BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE GOOD FRANCO-SOVIET RELATIONS CONTINUE TO BE A MATTER OF MUTUAL INTEREST. END SUMMARY.

1. TASS NEWS AGENCY'S VIOLENT ATTACK ON FRENCH INTERIOR MINISTER PONIATOWSKI JULY 2 FOR HIS ANTI-COMMUNIST STATEMENTS HAS OPENED THE ENTIRE QUESTION OF FRANCO-SOVIET RELATIONS TO PUBLIC SPECULATION. THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT THE SOVIETS SENT THE FRENCH A SIGNAL THROUGH THEIR ATTACK ON PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING'S CLOSEST POLITICAL ASSOCIATE, BUT THERE IS SOME DISAGREEMENT ON WHAT THAT SIGNAL IS EXACTLY. WE HAVE DISCUSSED THE QUESTION DURING THE PAST FEW DAYS WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY EUROPEAN DIRECTOR JACQUES ANDREANI AND HIS DEPUTY FOR EASTERN EUROPE YVON OMNES.

2. ANDREANI BELIEVES THAT THE SOVIETS ARE DISAPPOINTED WITH PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING'S FOREIGN POLICY AFTER HIS FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE. THE SOVIETS SUPPORTED GISCARD AGAINST MITTERRAND (WHO HAD COMMUNIST SUPPORT) IN THE EXPECTATION THAT HE WOULD CONTINUE THE MAIN LINES OF DE GAULLE'S FOREIGN POLICY. BUT THE SOVIETS HAVE FOUND GISCARD TO BE TOO EUROPEAN AND TOO ATLANTICIST. ALTHOUGH THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT DENIES THAT DISCUSSIONS ARE BEING HELD WITH THE FRG AT POLITICAL LEVELS ABOUT THE POSSIBLE STATIONING OF PLUTON TANKS IN GERMANY, THE SOVIETS SENSE THAT SOMETHING IS COOKING IN THIS AREA. IN THIS CONTEXT, THEY DON'T LIKE THE WHOLE IDEA OF AN INDEPENDENT EUROPEAN DEFENSE ARRANGEMENT, AND ARE SIGNALING THIS DISLIKE TO BOTH THE FRENCH AND THE GERMANS.

3. ANDREANI SAID THAT WHILE HE BELIEVES THE SOVIET DISAPPOINTMENT TO BE REAL, HE DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT FRANCO-SOVIET RELATIONS WILL CHANGE FOR THE WORSE. HE SAID THAT THE FRENCH ARE NOT DEMANDEURS IN THIS SITUATION. THE SOVIETS NEED GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE FRENCH AS MUCH AS THE FRENCH NEED GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS. ANDREANI FEELS THAT THE SOVIET ATTACK ON PONIATOWSKI, WHICH MUST BE INTERPRETED AS AN INDIRECT ATTACK ON GISCARD BECAUSE OF THE CLOSE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP, MUST ALSO BE SEEN AS PART OF THE SOVIET PREPARATIONS FOR

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DISCARD'S VISIT TO THE USSR NEXT OCTOBER. THE SOVIET TACTIC, ANDREANI SAID, IS TO PUT ALL THEIR GRIEVANCES OUT ON THE TABLE AND THEN DEMAND CONCESSIONS AS COMPENSATION.

4. ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OMNES SEES THE PROBLEM MORE IN TERMS OF COMMUNIST PARTY RELATIONS THAN STATE TO STATE RELATIONS. A MAJOR PREOCCUPATION OF THE SOVIETS AT

THIS TIME, OMNES SAID, IS TO PULL OFF A EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTY CONFERENCE WHICH WILL DEVELOP A CONSISTENT LINE ON THE EXPLOITATION OF CSCE IN NON-COMMUNIST EUROPE. THE OBJECTIVE, OF COURSE, WILL BE TO WEAKEN EVEN FURTHER THE POPULAR WILL TO MAINTAIN ADEQUATE DEFENSE FORCES. THE SOVIETS SACRIFICED FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY (PCF) INTERESTS DURING THE 1974 FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. IN ORDER TO ASSUAGE HURT PCF FEELINGS, AND TO ASSURE COMPLETE PCF SUPPORT FOR THE EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTY CONFERENCE, THE SOVIETS ARE NOW RESPONDING TO ANTI-COMMUNIST STATEMENTS BY GISCARD' TOP LIEUTENANTS.

5. IN TERMS OF FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY, OMNES POINTS TO WHAT HE CONSIDERS A SUCCESSFUL VISIT TO MOSCOW BY FINANCE MINISTER FOURCADE DURING THE PAST FEW DAYS AS EVIDENCE THAT STATE-TO-STATE RELATIONS REMAIN EXCELLENT. FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY CANNOT BE COMPLETELY DISCOUNTED AS AN ELEMENT IN CURRENT SOVIET ACTIONS, HOWEVER. OMNES BELIEVES THAT THE SOVIETS SEE MAJOR NEW CURRENTS DEVELOPING IN INTRA-EUROPEAN RELATIONS, AND THEIR CURRENT TACTICS REVEAL AN AMBITION TO CHANNEL THESE CURRENTS IN SPECIFIC DIRECTIONS. THE MAIN SOVIET OBJECTIVE, ACCORDING TO OMNES, IS TO MAKE SURE THAT THE BUILDING OF EUROPE SETS PARAMETERS AROUND THE GROWTH OF GERMAN POWER AND NOT SERVE AS A VEHICLE FOR A MAJOR EXPANSION OF GERMAN POWER. THIS IS WHERE THE FRENCH AND SOVIETS PROBABLY CONTINUE TO HAVE A COMMUNITY OF INTEREST, OMNES SAID, BUT THE SOVIETS ARE NOT SURE THAT GISCARD IS ON THE SAME WAVE LENGTH.

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